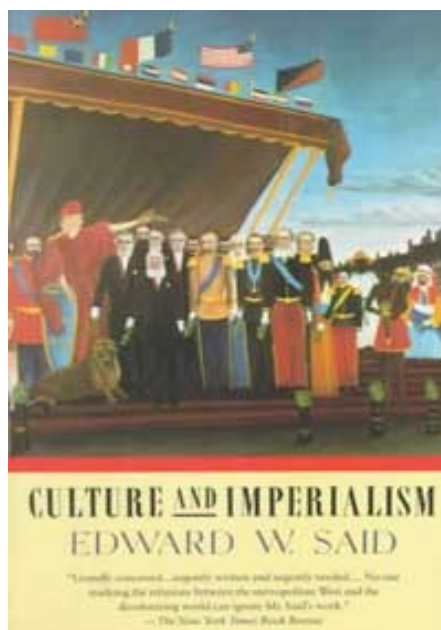




Culture and Imperialism

Edward W. Said

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Culture and Imperialism

Edward W. Said

Culture and Imperialism Edward W. Said

A landmark work from the intellectually auspicious author of *Orientalism* that explores the long-overlooked connections between the Western imperial endeavor and the culture that both reflected and reinforced it.

"Said is a brilliant . . . scholar, aesthete and political activist."--Washington Post Book World.

Culture and Imperialism Details

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Asma says

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sdw says

Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* employs a "contrapuntal" reading strategy by which he asserts the needs to examine texts from the perspectives of both colonized and colonizer. To read a text contrapuntally is to read it "with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts" (51). Contrapuntal reading requires not only reading the text in terms of what it includes but in terms of what has been excluded from it (66-67).

In one of Said's most broad-sweeping arguments, he contends that the novel itself is an artifact of imperialism, unthinkable outside the context of empire. To read the complicity and construction of imperial ideology in British, U.S. and French literature is not to dismiss the literature of unworthy of analysis but to suggest the need for the complexity of our analysis and examination of literature in relationship to empire. As he explains repeatedly, "understanding that connection does not reduce or diminish the novels' value as works of art: on the contrary, because of their *wordliness*, because of their complex affiliations with their real setting, they are *more* interesting and *more* valuable as works of art" (13). Said distinguishes this book from *Orientalism* both by employing a broad comparative literature framework to examine imperialism's relationship to culture as a broad system across a range of imperial ventures and through his attention to the resistance to imperialism also present in literature.

I was particularly attuned to his discussions of geography in relationship to empire in the texts he discusses. Spatiality is central to the ways in which Said identifies the relationship of the texts to imperialist ideologies.

He makes this argument masterfully in his discussion of *Mansfield Park* where he writes, “Then there is the hierarchy of spaces by which the metropolitan center and, gradually, the metropolitan economy are seen as dependent upon an overseas system of territorial control, economic exploitation, and a socio-cultural vision; without these stability and prosperity at home – ‘home’ being a world with extremely potent resonances – would not be possible. The perfect example of what I mean is to be found in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, in which Thomas Betram’s slave plantation in Antigua is mysteriously necessary to the poise and the beauty of Mansfield Park, a place described in moral and aesthetic terms well before the scramble for Africa, or before the age of empire officially began” (59). The possession of land is central to empire. Consequently, exposing ideologies about territorial control as well as the “primacy of geography” to the “interpellation of culture” by empire are central to Said’s project (78).

Notably, the final chapter turns to the United States and specifically to a discussion of the media coverage of the 1992 U.S. war against Iraq as well as maps out a vision for the productive future of the study of “world literature” or “Anglophone literature.” As Said explains, “The major task, then, is to match the new economic and socio-political dislocations and configurations of our time with the startling realities of human interdependence on a world scale” (330). He suggests the exile exists not as the forgotten and the margin but the norm in a world where experiences, identities, cultures, literatures, etc are hybrid. In this way, the exile represents “an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of the classic canonic enclosures, however much its loss and sadness should be acknowledged and registered” (317).

On a side note: I found his explanation of the difference between imperialism and colonialism worth keeping for later reference, “As I shall be using the term, ‘imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism,’ which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (9).

Second side note: Oddly enough, one of the most significant impacts of this book was to create in me a desire to re-read many of the 19th Century British novels I last read in high school.

Muhammad Ahmad says

Like all of Edward Said's writings this book is endlessly repetitive, but if you can wade through the thickets of verbiage you'll find gems of extraordinary insight. The subject of the book is obvious from the title, but the book also offers a trenchant critique of nativist nationalism. Drawing on Fanon, Said argues that nationalism might serve as a mobilizing force during the war of liberation but unless it develops a social and political vision in its evolution toward liberation, it will ossify into mere nativism. Said's analysis of empire's cultural appendages, and the responses of the colonized are original, but unfortunately there is little that is original in his chapter on America. His commentary on Conrad, whom he oldly lumps with Kipling over and over, is equally problematic. For a superior analysis of Conrad's prophetic "Heart of Darkness", I'd recommend Sven Lindqvist's "Exterminate All the Brutes".

Steffi says

So, yeah. The white woman in Africa, aka moi, is always a little obsessed with imperialism. Then again, working in international development where we teach them brown folks how to wash their hands and defecate in a more civilized manner in exchange for food made in USA and human rights, gets you a little

fascinated with imperialist ideology and colonial practice, doesn't it.

Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is kind of a sequel to his earlier book, now a classic, *'Orientalism'* (1978). So this book probably doesn't make too much sense without some kind of familiarity with *Orientalism-the-book* or at least *orientalism-the-concept* aka the West's patronizing and essentializing representations of the Orient/ The East.

(Second caveat: the book is like 25 years old so obviously things have changed. Like we are all eating tons of hummus and kimchi now and read non-Western authors, Murakami lol, watch Iranian movies and have African wooden masks or at least some Buddha shit in our bed rooms. But we kind of still feel great about invading brown folks' countries to change their governments, economies and cultural practices. Wouldn't they be so lost without us! Who can bring human rights and democracy if not our fancy weaponry? Not sure how exactly this relates to the book, lol, but just sayin'.)

Anyhow, the book (collection of essays) focuses on culture (primarily novels) and its link to empire in France, UK and the US. Like, yeah, culture plays a central role in maintaining and confirming power/ hegemonic ideology, imperialist or otherwise. So half of the book is a (too detailed) deconstruction of Western 19th and 20th century novels by (mainly) Austen, Kipling, Conrad, and Camus. Showing, kind of, how the novel implicitly reconfirms empire and imperialist ideology, sometimes less explicit (Austen) sometimes more so (Conrad). Then again Said is a literary critic so what exactly did I expect?

The second part is Said's 'contrapuntal analysis' (learned a new word), bringing together geographically, temporally and culturally discrepant and, at times, suppressive experiences and perspectives through reading 'colonial writers' besides the likes of Yeats (Ireland), Rushdie (India), Ngugi (Kenya), Mahfouz (Egypt) and Salih (Sudan).

The third part are essay that explore native movements of resistance in literature and theory, obviously very much Fanon inspired. The last part is the most interesting one re: modern day imperialism (read: early 1990s) and American ascendancy to global hegemony. That was even written before the post-9/11 hell broke loose, but the gist, especially the North-South divide, unfair trade practices, IMF free market crap, aid and debt traps remain so very, very relevant. Bottom line: imperialism did not end with de-colonization, 'imperialism remains the single most powerful force in the various political, economic and military relations in which developing countries are subjected to the more economically advanced'.

Lulu says

Edward Said's analysis of 19th and 20th century western written texts is outstanding. In *Culture and imperialism* Said makes the distinction between the two terms *Colonialism* and *Imperialism*. Before this book I used these terms interchangeably, even after reading the book I don't think I fully understand how they are different. In any case, I now know that *Colonialism* is the practise while *Imperialism* is the idea that shapes that practice. In other words Colonialism is: "Now we (The colonizer) own you (The colonized), your land, and we will be exploiting your economic resources to our benefit using brute force. We also know and want you to know that we are a superior racial group, our intellectual abilities are beyond your comprehension and reach". While imperialism is: "Now we (the colonizer) own you (the colonized), your land and we will be exploiting your economic resources to our benefit using culture and language alongside nuanced force. We discretely think and want you to think that we are a superior racial group that is intellectually blessed and would like to help you by making you more like us".

Culture and language are very powerful tools, Said demonstrates over and over how western imperialism uses the written word to dominate other nations and send some into near obliteration. The Foucauldian manner in which he excavates these materials is well suited, I'm only saddened that I'm not familiar with all the works he mentions (which I'm sure diluted my understanding of his thesis). Said shows how some oppressed voices chose to resist cultural displacement by refusing to write in english and writing in their mother language instead. Against the backdrop of *globalization* I don't see how that is a sound methodology to preserve one's culture and language. If you refuse to write in english and instead write in Kenyan for example, to preserve your culture and language that is great. However, I'm inclined to think that only a handful of people will read what you write, half of those people will comprehend what you are trying to present, and half of that half will respond to it. In other words, while you think as an intellectual you are strengthening your culture you are not even putting a dent in western imperialism, actually, you are helping it along by isolating yourself as an intellectual. Liberating oppressed voices is of course more complex than that but it is something I'm deeply thinking about.

A reader might think that this book is repetitive (maybe it is?!) but I don't think of it that way, what seems repetitive is actually a historical narration with stacks of evidence to support the writer's thesis. As far as I'm concerned the abundance of evidence presented strengthens the case which is necessary, especially given the boldness of Said's thesis. Despite being a challenging read, I would recommend this book to others curious about why we all need to speak english to exist in this world. I will definitely reread *Culture and imperialism* after I've read colonialism and postcolonialism for dummies, something I've should of done the first time around!

Liz Janet says

I first heard about this collection of essays via Philosophy Tube's video, in which he praised it as being quite good when compared to another piece of work he read. It is basically a book that focuses on how imperialism and colonialism affected and was presented in the writing of British authors, mainly in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries; all the while showing how such events shaped, mostly, British and French literature.

"No one today is purely one thing. Labels ... are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental."

The main take of the book comes from what has been said by many historians and political scientists, the present is still being affected by the effects imperialism had on the world. Although Said focuses on the cultural aspect, a bit of what he refers to (and quite a lot of philosophers agree on) molds the view of economic and political effects of colonization/imperialism. This is a book I would love to write a full review on.

"They weren't like us and for that reason deserved to be ruled."

Ông Huỳnh says

Thật thì khi đọc quyển này tôi cảm thấy ông Phan Luân, khi mà nó cũng xem như phần nào dài thì ông c'a Said trong PL (chính Said cũng nói qua như vậy).

Íi?m thú v? nh?t trong cu?n sách, có l? là vì?c tác gi? dùng r?t nhi?u nh?ng đ?n ch?ng v? v?n h?c, t? c? Íi?n ??n hi?n ??i, ?? di?n gi?i m?i quan h? bá quy?n gi?a "m?u qu?c" ph?ng Tây (ch? y?u là Anh và Pháp) và nh?ng n?c thu?c ??a c?a nó, qua ó ch?ng minh s? xâm l?n và "th?c dân hóa" v? m?t b?n s?c ??i v?i nh?ng dân t?c b? tr?. Có th? k? ra m?t vài nhà v?n tiêu bi?u mà Said nh?c ??n nh?: Joseph Conrad, Jane Austen, Albert Camus, Rudyard Kipling, G. Flaubert, William B. Yeats, ... và r?t nhi?u nhà v?n tên tu?i khác.

Nh?ng, m?c dù ?n t?ng v?i s? di?n gi?i v? v?n hóa ch? ngh?a bá quy?n c?a tác giá thông qua v?n ch?ng, mình th?y cách di?n gi?i c?a tác gi? ?ôi ch? ch?a th?c s? thuy?t ph?c, ??c bi?t là s? di?n gi?i v? v?n ch?ng c?a Jane Austen.

Cu?n sách này (ngoài nh?ng lu?n gi?i uyên bác, và ki?n th?c r?t sâu c?a tác gi? trên nhi?u l?nh v?c), trên h?t, ??a ng?i ??c m?t nh?n th?c m?i v? cái g?i là "Ph?ng ?ông" mà chúng ta luôn ngh? r?ng mình hi?u, nh?ng th?c ra ó là cách hi?u c?a "Ph?ng Tây v? Ph?ng ?ông", m?t s? "cai tr? v? bá quy?n" trên l?nh v?c v?n hóa, và là m?t "ý th?c h? cai tr? bá quy?n" mà thôi!

M?t Íi?m tr?, là sách quá dài, và tác gi? d?ng nh? ??y ng?i ??c vào s? nhàm chán ? nh?ng ch?ng cu?i cùng.

Arda says

I listened to this book through audible, and realized that while readers "skim through" academic researches/books, listeners of audible have the option to "speed-narrate". Some parts of this book I hesitantly listened to through speed-narration. Other parts, however, I savored, replayed and wished I had the book to quote and reference from. Edward Said embellishes his words and prepositions. He makes countless citations of literary work from different parts of the world, and he analyzes the literature so seriously that it almost seems like he's the only one in class paying attention.

While I studied English Language and Literature at Birzeit University (in the West Bank), Edward Said's name never once came up during the four semesters [even though he is celebrated in the Palestinian society and has often spoken at the University.] I was a little dismayed by this fact, which brought home key messages from the book itself on the study of literature, the power of the novel, "what" work is considered important to read, and "for what reasons".

Equally depressing was the fact that a few of my American friends had admitted to me that they did not read much, if any, non-American literature. This brought forth the realization that it would have to take an American a "personal interest" to choose to read "something else." Edward Said's reasoning may have developed some resentment in the way that the remnants of colonial and imperial ways of thinking are likely to still be present among us, and could even be within us as "receivers" of information.

Edward Said is an intellectual; extremely well-read and somewhat self-important. I have to admit that some chunks of the book (which I speed-narrated) were a little dull to listen to, such as his over-and-slightly-imposed scrutiny of Jane Austen's and Verdi's work, and the repetitive-and-slightly-overbearing analysis of other works of fiction. My earlier sense of dismay as to why we had not studied Edward Said at University started to shift to the question of: who would want to read this examination of literature in the first place if not for students or professors of literature! However, these few chapters are not what the book is about. They are simply examples leading to the bigger picture that Edward Said is gradually revealing before our eyes. The last chapters of the book brought rise to powerful messages that are perhaps becoming more relevant in our times than before.

One of the key messages here is that “power” is not really measured by the tanks and weapons but more importantly by literature and science. What do we read? And by whom? And how do we read what we read? It is mainstream culture that orchestrates power and regulates the public discussion on what the world is, and how it should be. Moreover, how does mainstream culture with all of its media, arts, literature and supposed-morality take over the world? What are the remnants of colonization and imperialism? And how do we find them in works of literature?

Edward Said, in the same line of Noam Chomsky, talks about manufacturing consent. He challenges the secular reader, i.e. us, to have a role. He challenges us to "think" about why we deem it necessary to read what we read, and how we read it. It is not only the reading of books, it would turn out, but the picking of concepts, too, that are trivialized and added to universities as though students ‘have the choice to pick them out like they are looking at a menu’: Communism. Women's Liberation. Slavery. Racism. Revolution. Colonization. Post Modernism. Orientalism... all of these theories that are placed before us.

There are strikingly important points that Edward Said makes at the very end of this book that were reminiscent of Amin Maalouf's “In the Name of Identity, Violence and the Need to Belong.” Both of these intellectuals seem to have battled with their identities in exile and came out with similar perceptions of how it is through “fear and prejudice” that patriotism and intolerance are made up. These may be the two factors that shape up mainstream culture, including the media, and, basically, the hegemony of discourse.

I could not help thinking about what Edward Said would make of social media today: Would he perhaps have thought that an app like twitter only reinforces the regulation of public discussion and mainstream culture? Would he have said the most-followed tweeps belong to “privileged ethnic groups” and that the rest of the world that is trying to emulate them are all but going to get crushed, or worse, ignored? Whoever said that this book is “dated” may want to reconsider.

Quote (!Spoiler Alert! Last Word):

“No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems to no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things; in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the “other echoes [that] inhabit the garden.” It is more rewarding –and more difficult—to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others than only about “us.” But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how “our” culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter). For the intellectual there is quite enough of value to do without *that*.”

Jeremy says

I remember being completely blown away by Said's 'Orientalism' years ago, and this book, like that one, is less concerned with resolving every possible issue it brings up than with inaugurating and providing profound moral and aesthetic incentives for a massive intellectual mission.

Said's goal here is not simply to explain the numerous ways that ideas of 'empire' and 'culture' bleed into each other, but to explain the broad humanistic necessity of studying that phenomenon at all. This book, more than anything I've read in my life, offers a profound statement about why its important to exhume the writings and works of the politically marginal, the dispossessed and the displaced.

That's a project which has arguably become one of if not the dominant goals of the humanities in our age. If you've taken a college level literature course in the past ~20 years that has focused on 'non-white' 'non-western' writers, or characters of that type within western literature itself, it's largely because Edward Said and others like him made an impassioned, essential case for why that mattered. His influence in the academic world is, in many ways, almost too large to quantify.

Said emerges in this, as in his other work, as one of the most erudite, sophisticated, and (perhaps most importantly) profoundly humane thinkers of the past century. I can't imagine any thinking person reading him and not being affected.

Ali Reda says

Texts are not finished objects.

Foucault's discourse is systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak. Foucault traces the role of discourses in wider social processes of legitimating and power, emphasizing the construction of current truths, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry with them. He later theorized that discourse is a medium through which power relations produce speaking subjects.

Edward Said's work depends on this notion by asking how we read texts. For any text is constructed out of many available discourses, discourses within which writers themselves may be seen as subjects.

For Said, The critic's function is both enhanced and focused by his or her capacity to be in the world. Perhaps the best conception of the critic's worldliness can be found in a passage from a twelfth-century Saxon monk called Hugo of St Victor which Said uses more than once:

The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his.

And as Said said:

Criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom".

In summary "Speak Truth To Power".

Said main doctrine is that through culture, the assumption of the divine right of imperial powers to rule is supported, that the institutional, political and economic operations of imperialism are nothing without the power of the culture that maintains them. The imperial nations have not only the right but the obligation to rule those nations lost in barbarism to civilize them. As Conrad puts it:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an Unselfish belief in the idea -- something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.

He gives an example from Kipling's *Kim*, where Kipling has the widow of Kula says, when a District Superintendent of Police walks by, that

These be the sort to oversee justice. They know the land and the customs of the land.

which is Kipling's way of demonstrating that natives accept colonial rule so long as it is the right kind.

They weren't like us and for that reason deserved to be ruled.

Said's resistance to this is by what he calls "the voyage in" , to

enter into the discourse of Europe and the West, to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalized or suppressed or forgotten histories.

For example by rewriting these classics from the point of view of the colonized. This subtle movement beyond simple binary

refuses the short-term blandishments of separatist and triumphalist slogans in favour of the larger, more generous human realities of community among cultures, peoples, and societies.

He refuses works that just promotes the nationalism of the oppressed,

to the theory of the absolute evil of the native the theory of the absolute evil of the settler replies.

because it

reinforces the distinction even while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner.

so he avoids this binary opposition of east and west and this summaries his Worldliness. A dialogue between equals.

Karmologyclinic says

Maybe even more relevant to the discourse of our times than when it was written.

J.I. says

Dense and sometimes irritatingly circular in logic, this book is still a fantastic piece of examining postcolonial literary theory. Rooted in literature, this book looks at the history around the works (though not in as extreme a detail as *Orientalism* and analyses it. When it goes to far, it can tend to be annoying (for example, while *Aida* is a brilliant example of imperialist orientalisng a culture, and the history around it are interesting, it too specifically points to the cultural circumstances as being the reason that *Aida* came out as it was (ie: a specific attempt by Verdi) rather than influencing the attitudes indirectly, which is a stronger argument both for *Aida* and also for the concept), but when it isn't exaggerating, it is clever and helpful. Oh, ignore the last chapter. It's interesting but a tangent.

Hesham says

This book is not a mere sequential book of *Orientalism*,but rather a far-sighted thesis with a relatively sound conclusion.

here Edward said is more explicit about his main object,namely to go beyond the constrained narrative within the terrain of imperialism.he wanted to show us how cultural forms as the novel,historiography,philosophy,anthropology etc, which are product of the culture, contain imperial attitudes and references which are read uncritically.

his intention is not to condemn those authors-whose works contain these attitudes and references- of being apologists or implicit supporters for any empire, nor to devalue the aesthetic side of such works.instead, Edward said was much concern with the neglected side of such works(its relationships with the building of traditions of imperialism and the power of narrating).

It is not about what we read but it's about how we read and interpret admirable texts without reducing its aesthetic value.

Finally,what came to my mind during the last chapter of this book about Edward said approach is that he sounds more humanistic and less vociferous,and his cultural and academic upbringing helped him substantially in delivering his thesis.therefore his motif in *Culture and Imperialism* is to read the literature as a product of the whole humanity,thus he suggests to read it contrapuntally,a suggestion which seems to me more perceptive than to be just an idealistic illusion.

Adam says

Edward Said makes one of the strongest cases ever for the aphorism, "the pen is mightier than the sword." This is a brilliant work of literary criticism that essentially becomes political science. *Culture and Imperialism* demonstrates that Western imperialism's most effective tools for dominating other cultures have been literary in nature as much as political and economic. He traces the themes of 19th- and 20th-century Western fiction and contemporary mass media as weapons of conquest and also brilliantly analyzes the rise of oppositional indigenous voices in the literatures of the "colonies." Said would argue that it's no mere coincidence that it was a Victorian Englishman, Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton, who coined the phrase "the pen is mightier . . ." Very highly recommended for anyone who wants to understand how cultures are dominated by words, as well as how cultures can be liberated by resuscitating old voices or creating new voices for new times.

Edward Said es todo lo que está bien en este mundo (y en la crítica literaria, tbh).

Darran McLaughlin says

I didn't finish this to be honest. I got halfway through and gave up. He analyses Verdi's opera Aida as an example of his thesis on the Imperialising nature of western culture because of factors like the fact that Verdi didn't present a thoroughly accurate version of Egyptian society in the opera. He included women among the dancers at one point when in fact it should have only been men. Shakespeare refers to the coast of Bohemia in a Winter's Tale. It doesn't matter that Bohemia is landlocked, art doesn't have to conform to reality and this kind of looseness with the facts certainly isn't unique to western portrayals of colonies.

Basically I can see the point of his thesis but he repeats himself and uses too much hyperbole to hammer his point home. He criticizes other critical approaches and overstates his case; for example declaring that the 19th and 20th century novel (particularly the French, American and above all the English) are unthinkable without Imperialism and vice versa. He says the key to Austen's Mansfield Park, around which everything else resolves itself, is the sugar plantations the Bertram's own in Antigua, which seems ridiculous to me.

Reading this you would think that Said has no idea that the phenomenon of Imperialism has occurred all over the world in every culture throughout history. Post-colonial, Marxist, feminist and other politically charged interpretations of literature and art just seem too ideologically narrow to me I suppose. They certainly have value and can lead to interesting insights, but I find them overly restrictive.

Andrew says

With ever Said book I read, my admiration gets greater and greater. The central question of Culture and Imperialism-- one that Said is unable to answer, and one that nags anyone who loves literature but has a conscience-- is how can we reconcile a brilliant literary vision with the imperialist leanings and practice?

What I love about Said is that he provides no easy excuses for himself or for anyone else. While fiercely anti-imperialist, he refuses to apologize for local elites in post-colonial states who exploit their own people or the corrupt governments of countries like Syria and Jordan that fiercely oppose Israel but still mistreat Palestinian refugees. And, unlike legions of French postmodernists, he has a keen eye for literary and cultural issues but recognizes that the battlefield of culture is decidedly secondary to the actual battlefield. When Said died several years ago, we lost not only a great critic and writer, but one of the last thinkers who was willing to tackle the big global issues.
